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JESUS CHRIST LIBERATOR

AND PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED

The common paths of Leonardo Boff and Paulo Freire

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1. INTRODUCTION

My interest in the similarities and the common discourses of liberation theology and critical pedagogy is a result of my previous academic background in theology, as well as my professional experience – having worked for many years in a Christian international NGO/evangelical denomination which have a deep involvement with international development and social justice projects. The aforementioned is now combined with my present studies in the master's degree program of Education and Globalization, in which the complexities of the phenomenon of globalization are studied from the more specific perspective of education. Thus, this research will be an attempt to trace possible areas of mutual interest between theology and education, to see how these two influence, challenge, shape, and relate to each other.

During the last four decades of their history, liberation theology and critical pedagogy have had a number of factors that closely connect them to each other. They were born and then grew wider from a similar context of geographical, historical, economic, social, cultural, ideological, religious and political struggles in Latin America.

The goal of this thesis is to find out the ways through which the construction of these two was made, i.e. how liberation theology and critical pedagogy came into being – more specifically, to focus on the common ideas, as well as in the language they use to explain their interpretations of the world. What are their epistemic frameworks, ethical values and ideological positions? Moreover, my goal is to situate and reflect on how their criticality enforces and relates to one another in the fields of religion and education, as well as in the social struggles of the different interests of the globalized world.

In order to establish the common discourse between liberation theology and critical pedagogy, a focus will be given to one representative scholar of each of them, concentrating on their main written work. For liberation theology, Leonardo Boff will be studied. His book *Jesus Christ Liberator - A Christology*

for Our Time will be closely analyzed, while it will also be compared to its contemporary of the scholar of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, and his most well-known and important work, i.e. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Both scholars are Brazilian, just as they are critical thinkers with a strong Marxist ideological conscience for social justice and engagement with the cause of the poor and the marginalized, identifying with the Christian faith. The concepts and the epistemological construction of these two authors have helped other scholars in the fields of education, theology and social sciences to set important bases for their respective fields of critical thinking, critical literacy and for the empowerment and emancipation of the oppressed. Moreover, the outcries of *Jesus Christ Liberator* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* are still relevant for our times, since realities of poverty have not changed. Freire and Boff are men who are committed to extern ideals and imaginaries of liberation from constructed forces of oppression, which are still strong today. These books explicate and expose those oppressive forces, going beyond that: they give alternative cognitive nourishment for the empowerment of individuals in communities who want to grow in love, faith, hope, in sharing, in solidarity, equality, and in justice.

My plan is for this thesis to make use of a combination of the research methods of comparative and discourse analyses for investigating the books *Jesus Christ Liberator* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

One might question right away: What does theology, or even Christianity, have to do with education and with Paulo Freire? Or what does critical pedagogy have to offer to the Christian community and people's struggle to find faith in Jesus Christ? The challenge I have undertaken is to put together these two scholars, side by side, in order to gain a theoretical and historical knowledge and reflection about the two of them, while trying to grasp a sense of what kind of impact they may still have for their readers and for those who accept their journey of dialogue, today. Another important task is to analyze and listen to the existing criticism and assumptions about liberation theology and critical pedagogy, while trying to find out, as mentioned before, what are the possible

consequences for education and Christianity in multicultural societies, in today's globalized world. Moreover, it is necessary to bear in mind that the works of these two men have greatly impacted the Brazilian society, not to mention beyond the frontiers of the country, reaching international repercussion in many ways, some of which will be pointed out, later on. So, it is fair to say that, in this thesis, the Brazilian intellectual contribution to the fields of theology and educational sciences will also be evidenced, as we engage in dialogue through the themes and discourses of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Jesus Christ Liberator*.

Historically, Christianity has been directly and indirectly connected to education, more specifically formal education and all kinds of schooling. Both education and the Church have been the two hands of the same mission in many different setups, where at times the lines of interest and their methods have been invisible or very thin. The impact of Christianity on education is immeasurable. Even today, when parts of the world, such as Europe, are experiencing a strong secularism and a detachment from the Christian religion, there are still many educational institutions, teachers and policy-makers that act in cooperation with or are funded by Christian organizations, being oriented by the Christian faith. Thus, I will seek for awareness and for bringing about some thoughts concerning the impact of Christianity on education today, looking with lenses that are in accordance to the framework proposed by Freire and Boff.

The basic ground on which I find myself as a researcher is a critical one towards the historical constructions of modernity and the expansion of the western civilization by the violent evil practices of colonialism and exploitation of peoples, cultures and lands in all continents. This decisive and critical historical phenomenon cannot be ignored or minimized in case one wants to find the causal factors for the problematic of globalization. Attention must be paid to the discourse of the representative relations of power between the southern and northern global agendas. Thus, the causes of inequality and social injustice, which not only formed globalization, but still define and move the mainstream financial, economical, cultural, social and political engines of global imaginaries

– in which religion and education play an important role – will be questioned and problematized.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I propose a contribution in addressing the questions of the journeys that peoples, social classes, ethnicities, nations and civilizations have taken, to arrive where they are today. How is Christianity contributing, and how is it inserted in this global process? How can Christianity become a true libertarian religion? How can the relationship between Christianity and other religions and secular societies be one of harmony, without neglecting the libertarian calling for the oppressed of the earth? What do Christianity and faith in Christ mean today, from the critical perspective of Boff's liberation theology? And what common grounds do they share with Paulo Freire's libertarian pedagogy?

The exercise of looking at the world from the poor Latin American perspective comes along with the dialogue of the post-modern and post-colonial theories. These theories question the hegemonic Eurocentric norms, social and cultural constructions of modernity in place, bringing up the unspoken issues of the history of the Christian religion and education, and of how they have served for the purposes of conquest for the white men in the western civilization.

Colonialism, slavery, and former kinds of oppression changed and mutated into other sophisticated kinds of exploitation of human beings, as well as exploitation of the planet. Nowadays, a neoliberal capitalist creation of the free-market, developmentalist notions based on concepts of consumerism and fast solutions, fast food and fast disposal of labor forces, are expressions of the new face of colonialism, where global multinational corporations exploit resources, eco-systems and human beings.

My main research question concerns the works of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Boff's *Jesus Christ Liberator*. What do these have in common, in terms of language and discourse, as well as attitudes towards the problematic of the oppressed and the oppressors? What are the common paths

of these two books and what do they have to say to globalization questions, in relation to Christianity and education? How much of Freire's theory can we find inside the theology of liberation? And can biblical notions of identification with the historical Jesus of Nazareth be found in the secular Freirean pedagogical discourse?

3. METHODOLOGY – COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The methodology used in this thesis is qualitative research, combined with discourse analysis for the comparison of the works of the two authors, specifically concentrating on one book of each. Freire and Boff belong to two different fields of social sciences, theology and education. The first author, Freire, is an influential educator who has reached great international recognition because of his work with adult literacy and through the elaboration of a theory in education sciences, which has later on been referred to as critical pedagogy. His book, which will be used for the purposes of this research, is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, his most important and most read work. Other books of the same author will be used as background for the thesis, as well, along with videos of interviews available on web 2.0 pages, such as YouTube.

The work of Boff, one of the founders of the Latin American theological school, known as liberation theology, will be compared to Freire's. The main book used for the comparison is *Jesus Christ Liberator, a Critical Christology for Our Time*. Besides this, other books of his, as well as interviews, articles and other internet material such as tweeter and blogs will be used as available data.

The books used for this thesis, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Jesus Christ Liberator*, are English editions/translations. However, as both authors are Brazilian, and Brazilian Portuguese is their mother tongue, some of the aforementioned books, articles, and interviews are in Portuguese. These will be translated from Portuguese into English by me, whenever necessary. The translations which I make will be revised by a native Portuguese-speaking linguist, a graduate in English Philology.

According to Silverman (2001: 178), discourse analysis is concerned with topics related to social sciences, e.g. gender relations, social control, etc. Discourse analysis can be used for analyzing different kinds of texts and documents,

everyday talk, open-ended interviews, and so on, and at times different materials are combined in the same study.

Potter (1997) gives the following definition for discourse analysis:

Discourse Analysis has an analytic commitment to studying discourse as texts and talk in social practices... the focus is... on languages as... the medium for interaction; analysis of discourses becomes, then, analysis of what people do. One theme that is particularly emphasized here is the rhetorical or argumentative organization of talk and texts, claims and versions are constructed to undermine alternatives.
(Potter, 1997: 146).

In discourse analysis, special attention is given to language in conversational details and styles of text, the interest lying in finding how particular imaginaries, ideas and assumptions become the cultural norm and the unproblematic truth. For Potter (1997: 148), discourse analysis helps not only to understand how inequalities are constructed, but also how they are fabricated in such a coherent way for it to be justified and maintained.

In comparing these two books, the main epistemic themes and vocabulary used by the authors will be analyzed and used for reflection, trying to identify the similarities in the books and in the theories of these two authors. Starting from that common standpoint, reflections will be constructed, seeking to entangle both the fields of theology and education, from a Brazilian perspective, in an attempt to find (1) what the global implications of the common discourses are; (2) what the works of Freire and Boff mean for the fields of religion and education, in the western society of 2012; (3) and what their discourses mean for other societies.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Both Freire and Boff invite their readers to find ways of emancipation and liberation from oppression. They do not accept the situational circumstances of oppression as a fatality. To find those paths of emancipation, or in Freire's own words, *conscientização*, translated as 'critical consciousness,' they mark their epistemic reasoning by taking up similar types of argumentation and language that encourage people to use independent criticality, dialogue, reflection and action in their sphere of influence; mainly, but not solely in the theological and educational fields. Chapter four will explicate the theories of Boff and Freire, liberation theology and critical pedagogy, respectively – and their formation and influence in the context of the 60s.

4.1. Critical theories in the context of the 60s

To understand Boff's theology and Freire's pedagogy, it is important to note the changes that were happening in the world in those days. In the 60s, the critical ways of questioning traditional knowledge, assumptions, theories, practices, social conventions, hegemonic norms, power relations, culture, the social status quo, gender roles, sexual behavior and family traditions took place in many parts of the world.

According to da Silva (1999: 29), a number of important changes were begun in the 60s: "the movements of independency of the former European colonies; the demonstrations of students in France and in many other countries; the continuance of the civil rights movement of the United States; the

demonstrations against the war in Vietnam; the Counterculture movement; the feminist movement; sexual liberation; the struggle against the military dictatorship in Brazil,” (da Silva 2002: 29) among others. Furthermore, he argues that, not coincidentally, all these events came at the same time as new theories which started to challenge traditional educational structures.

Other critical theories worth mentioning here due to their significance are: critical sociology; the Marxist philosophy; contemporary phenomenology; post-colonialist theories; multiculturalism; the queer theory; post-modernism; post-structuralism and feminism, among others.

Summarizing the common aspects found in these theories, we can identify tendencies against metanarratives, questioning the status quo and hegemonic privileges and norms. These theories criticized the fixed, pre-established and unproblematized traditional norms, concepts, knowledge and assumptions in history, texts, literacy, language, policies, economy, society, religion, culture and so on. And these critical theories brought opposition to oppressive marginalizing elitist discourses and practices. As for curriculum and educational structures, Aronowitz & Giroux (1991: 93) mention some of the uprising struggles with the traditional:

Challenging the commonsense assumptions – dominant ideology of discourse and power, reconstruct theoretical frameworks, analysis and rethinking what the actual purpose of their teaching might be; interrogating the connection between language and power... curriculum theory as a form of text authority; understanding curriculum theory as a struggle between dominant and subordinate discourses. (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991: 93).

The politics of the 60s were also of a time of military dictatorship in Brazil and in most of the countries of Latin America. At the time, many people who identified with Marxist critical leftist ideas disappeared, being imprisoned, tortured, or

even killed. As the preface of *Jesus Christ Liberator* says, the word *liberation* was forbidden in the media in Brazil. Nobody was allowed to speak, write or sing about freedom in academic circles, in churches, schools or cultural events, nor anywhere in the media. Artists, who wanted to sing against the military dictatorship oppression, had to make use of figurative language, when attempting to pass unidentified through censorship.

4.2. Boff and liberation theology

In the context of censorship, Boff was a kind of exception. He enjoyed a safe haven because his writing was connected and identified with the core of the Christian message, and thus, with the umbrella of the Catholic Church, whose political power in Brazil was considerable at the time. His new ideas were attached to the already accepted and respected Christian teaching: built on the pre-existing message of the life example of Jesus. Nevertheless, his was a new discourse, with a novel emphasis on Jesus as a liberator. Before looking into the common paths in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Jesus Christ Liberator*, the following subsections will attempt to explore and summarize the main characteristics of liberation theology through the lens of Boff, as well as Freire's critical pedagogy.

4.2.1. The Christology of Boff

Boff, as a theologian, is concerned with the religious affairs of the powers of Christianity and their influence on the oppressed of society. He makes use of

the person of Christ, onto which he bases his theology and critical view of the status quo in society. By the time he wrote *Jesus Christ Liberator*, as a catholic priest, Boff used neither the tradition of the Church and its mainstream discourse nor approaches on Christian faith as the basis for his argumentation. But, centralizing his argumentation in the historical person of Jesus, he emphasized the Jesus divinity as God, incarnated in blood and flesh as a human being, while presenting critical libertarian revolutionary Christology as a base for his ideas.

First of all, the context in which Boff wrote this has been considered. Who is Christ? Boff finds in Jesus the source of his argumentations for the liberation and love for the oppressed people, offering a new lens of approach to the central dogmas of Christianity – a lens that provides those who read the Bible with an opportunity to find a Christ that is identified and engaged with the poor, the marginalized, the stigmatized, the crippled, the blind, the excluded, the disfavored, to mention some of the oppressed. Boff does not see criticism as a threat to faith in Christ, but takes critical thinking as an important necessary practice by the oppressed in the process of liberation from its circumstances of oppression.

As the analysis of Boff's interpretation of Christ is undertaken, there will be no intention of approaching Boff's argumentation about the nature and historicity of Christ, or the validity and authenticity of Christian faith. However, the great importance of Christianity and its influence go far beyond the religious and philosophic spheres. The relevance of Christianity in the construction of the western civilization, its importance as one of the biggest and most influential religions of the world, and its role in history in the last two thousand years, is all hereby acknowledged.

The Christology of Boff is not limited to a metaphysic presentation of Jesus, with eternal and celestial dimensions and applicability to the human soul. On the contrary, in Boff's Christology, the message of Jesus on liberation is applicable to our times, here and now. Christ does not liberate the soul alone, but the whole person. Likewise, the bondages of oppression are not only a spiritual

religious metaphor. Liberation means freedom, today, from the conditions that hinder us from being free.

Boff's *Jesus Christ Liberator* has been slightly changed with the years, with more reflection and objectivity being added to it, something unpermitted during the dictatorship. Jesus is a prophet who reveals and proclaims the Kingdom of God as an opposition to and liberation from all kinds of bondage. For Boff, there is no dichotomic application for the gospel; rather it is a reality not only for heaven, but for earth, as well; not only liberation in religious terms, but also for politics or economic and social conditions. Boff levels earth and heaven again, later on in his *O Pai Nosso*, when writing on the prayer Jesus taught men to pray, asking for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

If Boff's theological production timeline is followed, it is clear that in comparison to a later period, when he wrote *Jesus Christ Liberator* he was still quite careful with his arguments against the hierarchies and the authority of the Catholic Church. His theology had clearly been strongly influenced by the European theology at the time, especially that from Germany, where he completed his PhD in theology. As a father of the Franciscan Order, Boff identified with the values of modesty and simplicity, i.e. identification with the poor. Like other Latin American theologians, his aim was to bring a new kind of revolutionary message from within the church, a message of liberation and freedom from domination. So far, his argumentation about the church as an institutional body and the hierarchies and the power of the Vatican were careful and traditional. That would change later on, in the 80s. When writing *Church, Charism & Power* in 1981, he openly questions the hegemonic concentration of power by the institutional church. Consequently, the current Pope, Cardinal Ratzinger – leader of the Council of Discipline – led a historical campaign to silence Boff, as Brown tells us (ReligionOnline).

Another factor we have to consider is that while Freire wrote his book in exile – out of the range of the oppressive hands of military Brazilian dictators – Boff wrote amid the repressive system that was in power in those days. He tells us that even the word *liberation* could not be used in those days. In the context of

the Cold War, this was the kind of vocabulary identified with communism, and that was reason enough to get into real trouble. After *Jesus Christ Liberator* had been published, Boff says in an interview for Sul21 that he had to hide from the police for fifteen days, fearing for his life (Sul21).

During the dictatorship, unions, churches, government agencies, military headquarters, universities and schools were all repressed and infiltrated with spies that were out to find any kind of expression of Marxism. In fear of the Cold War, capitalist minds, multinational corporations, and the American and European governments did not find it difficult to support and become allies to the violent dictatorships that repressed anarchy and Marxist movements, or their sympathizers.

The context of the works and lives of Boff and Freire takes new dimensions in today's Brazil and South America. Finally, with viable political support and after twenty-seven years of democracy in Brazil, President Dilma Rousseff has started the process of investigation and clarification of the crimes committed throughout the years of military dictatorship, as BBC news reports (BBC). Other countries in South America are going in the same direction. An important political and legal battle has been opened, at last, with the intention of finding out what really happened, and of bringing healing to a generation that was not allowed to raise their voices against government oppression.

4.2.2. Liberation theology as seen through the lens of Boff

In 1971, a Peruvian priest called Gustavo Gutiérrez wrote *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*. Boff considers this event to be an initial mark of liberation theology. Simultaneously in Brazil, Boff started to write articles to a magazine during the repression of military dictatorship. Later, these were transformed into his *Jesus Christ Liberator*.

Liberation Theology is a response from the Christian faith to the outcries of the youth for liberation and freedom, in the 60s. Subsequently, this movement resounded inside churches of the world, and liberation theology emerged as an attempt of expression by Latin American Christians that were engaging in civil society with active political participation, and an engagement for the transformation of oppressive conditions. This politicized civil engagement has been the target of severe criticism by conservative Christians. However, Boff does not see liberation theology as a politicized use of faith, but rather as a practice of evangelism which includes the political perspective as an important part of its range and concern.

Differing from the historical traditional Eurocentric theology, liberation theology was formed and embodied in the peripheries, in the underdeveloped, poverty-stricken parts of the world – parts in which the aim became that of developing outside the limits of oppressive conditions, including deliverance from those conditions. Boff figures among the first generation of liberation theologians, just as Gustavo Gutierrez, Juan Luiz Segundo, Hugo Asmann, Enrique Dussel and Miguel Bonino – all of whom are from South America, wherein the origins of liberation theology lie.

Worthy of notice is the fact that Boff considers Freire's theory so fundamental for liberation theology, that he mentions Freire as one of its very founders: "Paulo Freire, who was also one of the founders of liberation theology, noted that the poor must be the agent of his/her own liberation" (Twitter).

4.2.3. Central to liberation theology: the poor and the oppressed

The poor, and their concrete reality of oppression, are the reason for the existence of liberation theology – that is to say, the struggle for liberation for all those who suffer. In the crucified Jesus, an oppressed identifies with another

oppressed one, and together they aim for liberation. This identification with the crucified Christ is also a mark of liberation theology throughout its history, because in choosing the poor, it attracted criticism, persecution and adversity.

According to Boff, the socio-economical aim of liberation theology is not making the poor rich, but bringing justice in order to change the realities that cause poverty. Boff (Wordpress), mentions three different alternative approaches to poverty and the situation of the poor:

- (1) The assistant and paternalistic kind, that only looks at the poor as the 'don't haves'. The ones who do have, referred to as the 'haves,' mobilize to help alleviate the conditions of the 'don't haves'. This approach causes the fate of the poor to be one of constant dependence on the good will of others.
- (2) The poor as one who has the strength and the capability to obtain better conditions in life, through hard work, by learning new professional skills to fulfill the demands for insertion in the labor market. In this approach, the poor becomes a part of the chain of production, progress and development, without a critical evaluation of the exploitation of human and natural resources in use by the production system – falling, therefore, short of becoming liberated from an oppressive excluding system.
- (3) The poor is perceived as the subject of his own destiny, as someone who has the strength to change their history: "the strength to change the system of domination for another one which is more equal, participative and just" (Wordpress). Paulo Freire helped formulate this strategy, an adequate solution for overcoming poverty. For liberation theology, this is the meaning and the purpose of the poor.

4.2.4. The multi-facedness of liberation theology

For Boff, it is important to pay attention to the faces and concrete realities of the oppressed, finding out what they are, as well as their particular stigmas. Liberation theology seeks to uncover the forces oppressing them, avoiding simplistic generalization that only serves for putting labels on people. A real interest for the oppressed is helpful for understanding the situation of each group, taking their aspirations for liberation seriously. As a first instance, liberation theology is a clear reflective and practical response to poverty and to its lack of basic material means. Nevertheless, it does not stop there, but goes much further to identify itself with all kinds of oppressed people, as Boff writes: “the indigenous, the marginalized black, the women submitted to male domination, the denigrated religions and others possessing social stigmas” (Wordpress).

There are several tendencies and expressions of the manifestations of liberation theology. These are concerned with violence and marginalization in gender, social classes, ethnicity, religion, culture, history and issues of ecology, among others. In Boff’s lens, liberation theology has the color of its population – in the Latin American case, it is indigenous, black and Latino.

Boff argues that liberation theology represents the proclamation of the message that exposes the economical capitalistic exploitation of human beings and nature, in Latin America. It also unmasks the political and economical elites that have served and benefitted from it. Likewise, liberation theology applies a critical view to history, while denouncing perversity in the “collective project of invasion” (Wordpress), and assault of Latin America by colonialism. In this spirit, history is perceived from the perspective of the victims of the oppression, enabled to denounce the institutionalized church and missionary practices that were a decisive part in colonialism. Boff quotes Spengler in *The Decline of the West*, who argues that “the Iberian invasion was the greatest genocide in human history” (Mirada), with destruction amounting to circa ninety per cent of

the population. Despite that, the institutional Church and the colonial powers have never recognized these historical crimes, nor tried to compensate for their deeds.

All the tendencies in liberation theology engage in a scientific critical approach for liberation from its realities in the light of faith, refreshing the Christian message with an emphasis that is committed to concrete changes towards justice and freedom, for those who are oppressed and unprivileged.

4.2.5. The methods and praxis of liberation theology

The from-the-bottom-up method of making theology is, in Boff's opinion, the greatest contribution to theology, in general. The starting point of this theology is the cruel existing realities, rather than doctrines, Vatican documents, or even biblical texts.

For Boff (Wordpress), the extreme compassion towards the poor and their misery is to have its origins in the recognition and understanding of the divine spiritual experiences of encounters between the oppressed, the "flagellated Christs of history," (Wordpress), a term diffused by de las Casas & de Ayala. In this way, the experience of poverty becomes a metaphysic spiritual experience, where Christ, the crucified, suffers again in other crucified ones. The poor and marginalized become one with Christ, and Christ becomes present in their existing struggles.

This spiritual experience of compassion can only be valid when followed by a feeling of profound inconformity, an ethical indignation that looks for critical identification with the mechanisms that produce oppression. In this methodology, once the mechanisms of oppression are identified with the critical

eyes of faith and reason, the next step is action – the theological embodied into praxis of liberation by the oppressed.

For Boff, struggles are not the only element in the methods of liberation theology. The culmination point of the method of liberation theology is celebration, the collective joyful feeling of belonging and self-awareness, as a result of the united transformative forces. Liberation theology does not neglect the culture of festive expressions, characteristic of the Latin American people.

4.2.6. Emancipation for theological construction

Rather than traditional hierarchical and centralized church practices, liberation theology gives the poor ownership of the contents of the Bible, by presenting democratic hermeneutic possibilities for the Christian communities in the sharing of the Scriptures and general Christian knowledge. This new approach gives way for more relevant meaning to the divine texts, in the practical daily context of ordinary people. In liberation theology, the Bible, unrestricted by a priestly *altar* interpretation and explanation, is to be opened, free from the rigid doctrinarian dogmas of the official religious institutions.

As a natural result, in its identification with the poor, liberation theology became a questioning voice on richness and the accumulation of wealth by the Vatican and other Christian organizations, because the situation of the poor, parallel to the wealth of the Church, is incompatible with the Christian message.

Reading the Gospels and facing the Jesus of Nazareth, artisan, factotum and Mediterranean peasant, they realize the contradiction between the poor condition of Jesus and the wealth of the great institution, the church. It is closer to

the palace of Herodes than the stable of Bethlehem.
(Wordpress).

Liberation theology offers criticism to the centralized hierarchical power of the Church, with its cold lack of compassion and flexibility in questions of moral standards, such as family and sexuality. God is seen as the Father that listens to and acts in favor of the oppressed people, as opposed to a cold rule maker. In Jesus, liberation theology finds its liberation climax, because he is presented as the liberator. For that reason, new ways of experiencing and accepting Christian life, based on more flexibility, grace, freedom and openness for adaptation to situational context of the communities have been proposed.

Finally, because of his original Catholic background, Boff finds identification with Mary, a central biblical person in the Catholic theology, as a woman of liberation. In Mary's prayer (Luke 1:51-52), she cries out to God, the avenger of the unjustified. Mary is seen as an inspiration and a model of strength and piety, both for the oppressed and the impoverished women in the world.

4.2.7. Liberation theology as a spiritual hierarchical revolution

As seen thus far, liberation theology is an alternative kind of theology, because it encompasses a strong political connotation of a revolutionary movement. In fact, Boff considers it a "spiritual revolution" (Wordpress). As every revolution, it is a bottom-up movement; this one from the peripheries of the world, and from its marginalized, repressed and oppressed classes.

Historically, the church treated the poor as the passive target of charity and compassion, but liberation theology places the poor in a position in which they can speak their own mind, read the Bible with their own eyes, and congregate in

worship in their own organized network of communitarian Christian groups, known as 'Christian Base Communities,' or *Comunidades Eclesiásticas de Base* - CEBs in Portuguese.

The revolutionary network of influence of liberation theology grew in such a fast and large way that it caused a disturbance over the hierarchical structures of the Roman Church. The Vatican, instigated by the clerical, political and religious conservative dominant interests in Latin America, became a strong opponent of liberation theology. As mentioned before, in the middle of the 80s, Cardinal Ratzinger used his official Church authority and power to repress liberation theology and its theological production, seeking to silence its voices and forbid literary productions of liberation theology inside the Catholic circles. As Boff tell us:

Many theologians were placed under observation, being carefully watched, reprimanded, warned, marginalized in their communities, accused, forbidden to exercise the ministry of the Word, removed from their chairs, or submitted to doctrinarian processes with the 'obsequious silence,' which forced them to be quiet. This rigidity did not diminish as he (Ratzinger) became the Pope, but continued with renewed fervor. (Wordpress).

Many of the followers of this theology have been imprisoned and tortured. This persecution was done by Christian oppressors, which wanted to keep the oppressive status quo in Latin America at any cost.

4.2.8. Liberation theology as a social and cultural revolution

As the ideologies and practices of liberation theology began to embody their representation inside the Church, through the so-called Christian Base Communities, they created a social and cultural revolution. The layman and the poor alike found the opportunity to share and unite in communities. Differently from most of their fellow protestant small Christian community groups, the followers of liberation theology did not limit their scope of influence to the religious sphere. Rather, this theological stream of the Catholic Church became very active in civil society, in unions, in leftist political parties, in the social movements of the landless peasants, with the indigenous, among the children, with the HIV positive, and so on.

According to Boff, liberation theology shows a priority of “orthopraxis over orthodoxies” (Wordpress) in this social and cultural revolution. With the turn of the new millennium, liberation theology shows its relevance and strength, participating and contributing actively in the World Social Forum, which was started in Porto Alegre, in the south of Brazil. Liberation theology has been formed as a sensitive body and an alternative channel for the oppressed of the world to have their own voice, as well as spaces in which to create and elaborate a new imaginary of realities and possibilities for the world. “Another world is possible,” (WSF) as the slogan of the World Social Forum goes – a forum to act as a counterpoint to the annual World Economic Forum, located in Davos, Switzerland.

4.2.9. What Boff believes the future of liberation theology to hold

In its historical development, Boff's epistemic contribution to liberation theology can be perceived as that of broadening its scope. The oppressed, marginalized and exploited can be found in the center of his concerns. The oppressed, according to Boff, are not only the poor of the earth. Over the years, Boff has shown a growing concern for the oppressed planet in which we live. Mother Earth is an additional important topic which has become a meaningful part of his theological writings. For him, environment exploitation has at its origins the same oppressing evilness, greed and the urge for domination and accumulation, which have caused the oppression of human beings. So, the concern with the poor has been extended to the concern for the Earth – a victim of the same logic, and what he calls “the Great Poor” (Boff 2007: 115).

The future of liberation theology for Boff is with the poor and the oppressed. He does not believe that this theology will ever find a place in the mainstream hierarchy of the Church, but it will remain in the margins of it. In Boff's opinion, when the institution of the Roman Church marginalized liberation theology, it made a clear choice for the rich. However, he recognizes that there are many individuals and sectors of the official Roman Catholic Church that are both engaged and concerned with the poor and their expressions of faith.

In a scatological perspective, Boff finds the multitude of poor, that the apocalyptic Book of Revelations calls “the survivors of the great tribulation” (Revelations 7.14), who will be consoled by the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, in an universal climax for all those oppressed in the history of mankind, as they meet God's grace in Jesus Christ in the end of times.

4.3. Freire and critical pedagogy

The next subsections will look into critical pedagogy through the lens of Freire, including its origins, its criticism, and the vocabulary it shares with biblical language. Finally, before going into the common discourse between Freire and Boff, Freire's own description of his faith in Christ in relation to his Marxian revolutionary ideas on the liberation of the oppressed will be discussed.

Just like the beginnings of liberation theology are situated in the changes of the world in the 60s and in the context of Latin America, the critical pedagogy theory, discourse and practice started to be shaped in the same decade. As a critical discourse in the field of education, critical pedagogy has its central figure in Paulo Freire. Freire has been widely recognized, criticized and studied in the circles of education. Other important exponents and theorists of critical pedagogy are e.g. Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Michael Apple, Donaldo Macedo and Joe Kincheloe, among others.

It could be argued that with the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire gives critical pedagogy its language, as well as a framework of concepts that formed this theory. Giroux (1991) has described his first experience and encounter with the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: as a high school teacher, he was frustrated with traditional, rigid practices and rules in education, when he encountered the book which gave him the language to understand his frustrations, and his ambitions for a better pedagogy in the American schooling context.

Before looking into its specifics in the next section, some of the general ideas of critical pedagogy will be discussed, including examples of influence, impact and responses it has raised in the last four decades. In part, critical pedagogy is similar to other critical theories. It can be associated with John Dewey, as well as with progressive and liberal education, at some point in the North American context. Nevertheless, the central core of this pedagogical approach starts in

the Latin American context of Freire, an educator among peasants and people of the slums.

During his childhood, Freire spent years around the people living in the reality of poverty. As an adult, he became a teacher in the poor areas of the state of Pernambuco, in northeastern Brazil, one of the poorest parts of the country. The awareness of the conditions of the poor gave Freire the sharp notion of the dominant privileges in society – those being benefitted by this status quo, and those excluded from the benefits of the system. Questions of interrogative sociological implications were born and asked: Who is the system serving and to whom is education beneficial? What results is it producing?

Critical pedagogy is concerned with the power structures of society. Its theorists believe that education should not be reduced to techniques and procedures in knowledge production transmission. It should not serve as an instrument of the neoliberal interests in producing non-critical, technically skilled labor force; one that meets the needs of the global free market and the continuation of the unjust distribution of resources and jobs in the globalized world. Finally, capitalism, financial speculation, global flow, consumerism, and globalized neoliberal political models of development are questioned for reinforcing and perpetuating the hegemonic conditions of the elites of the world.

For Freire, critical consciousness means the empowerment of the people, to understand the world around them. Literacy is not only desired to receive written messages, but to allow critical reflection on realities, as critical citizens that can be united, organized and engaged in changes.

According to Aronowitz & Giroux (1991: 118), the aim of critical pedagogy is to “create critical citizens, rather than good ones” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991: 118). It is a pedagogy that links schooling to the notions of democracy, freedom, emancipation, participation, empowerment, autonomy, innovation, awareness, reflection, questioning and curiosity, for the utopist imagination and for more just and fair possibilities.

Aronowitz & Giroux (1991: 93) argue further that questioning the traditions of education is encouraged, and not a single assumption or fact related to education should be taken for granted in the lens of critical pedagogy. Not limited to finding injustice, it is also a reflective and active exercise that enables and encourages the oppressed. It is a tool for acting for the transformation of the unjust realities of oppression, e.g. the curriculum and hidden curriculum; teachers' status, roles and practices; policy-making concepts, plans and implementations; textbooks; research and knowledge production; representations of language; ethnicity; gender; religion; budgetary investments and allocations of resources in education; and so on. Everything is brought to the light of this questioning criticism of the pedagogical practice. At the same time, everything is welcomed to the table of possibilities, in democratic representations and challenging of power relations. The notions of domination should be challenged, to rethink about what the actual purposes of teaching might be.

Moreover, the traditional view of the student as a passive *tabula rasa* is rejected by the critical pedagogy theorists. Students should not be seen as passive recipients of knowledge, but they should be both involved in producing knowledge, and taken seriously as they are encouraged to raise their voices, and to reflect on their own experiences – growing in knowledge, while being guided by their teacher, to become empowered critical thinkers that can change the realities of oppression. Similarly, teachers should not be limited to being dispensers of information in the classroom. Empowered teachers have the autonomy to critically engage in the production of pedagogical nurture and in the guidance of transformative practices.

4.3.1. Criticism against critical pedagogy

An existing criticism against the theory of critical pedagogy is the potential it has to indoctrinate, radically ideologizing the ways in which policymakers, teachers and students see education and all its intrinsic ethical, political and pragmatic values, changing education into a pure politicized practice. Theorists must bear in mind, as Burbules & Berk (1999: 54) argue, that students who think critically must be allowed to arrive at their own conclusions, “yet critical pedagogy seems to come dangerously close to prejudging what those conclusions must be” (Burbules & Berk, 1999: 54).

The use education for indoctrination, however, is not what Freire proposes. On the contrary, Freire (2000: 78) advises educators to be aware of the dangers of indoctrination and of imposing the teacher’s ideas on students, also a pattern of oppression and domination (See Ginsburg 1988: 151).

Despite criticism, Freire (2000: 86) has no intention of producing a framework that is free of politics. On the contrary, according to his theory, there is no such thing as a neutral education, completely free of policies. Ideologies will be always present in the pedagogical practice, and educators should be aware of that. All pedagogy has its agenda: it either serves for liberation or domination; for emancipation or dependency; for the benefit of the oppressor or the oppressed. It will always serve some kind of interest and ideals (Freire, 2000: 86). It either reinforces or perpetuates a systemic reality, or it is a transformative praxis of action and reflection that is not conformed to the structures established by the dominant elites.

In Brazil, as in many other countries where critical pedagogy has a strong influence on teachers, there is much criticism, today, of the ways in which teacher training and academic pedagogical theoretical and practical programs are elaborated. Many conservatives and neo-liberals believe that critical pedagogy has marked teacher education ideologically in such a strong way, that it has gone as far as to the point out that it has focused on the politicizing

training of teachers, at the expense of a good and balanced pedagogic education for teachers in formation. On the other hand, Freire (2000: 15) says that in some places, such as the US and other western countries, critical pedagogy is kept away from mainstream teacher education programs, as if it did not exist.

4.3.2. Biblical language in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

As seen before, this thesis is looking at the relationship between the philosophical and educational epistemic of Freire and the proximity of his work to the thinking of Boff and liberation theology. An attempt will now be made to find some of Freire's beliefs and ideas about the Christian faith, as well as some similarities between the Freirean and the biblical languages.

There are many elements in Freire's language, vocabulary and discourse that show the familiarity he has with the Christian faith and the Bible itself. Before his personal faith and his concepts about God and Jesus are considered, some examples of biblical language in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* will be given. Freire discourses about the human being and the "ontological vocation" (Freire 2000: 66) of not being conformed or passive towards the status quo of the world, transforming it, instead. In Freire's own words, "the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation" (Freire 2000: 54).

One can easily identify the affinity of this text with the words of the apostle Paul to the Romans: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2). Here, both the biblical and the Freirean texts emphasize the importance of using the mind

critically, when committing to the transformation of the world, without conforming to it.

Just like Boff's liberation theology, the Freirean choice for the poor, the oppressed and the pedagogy of liberation aiming for freedom, can be compared to the similar language the prophetic words of Jesus, when announcing the beginning of his earthly ministry and the reality of the Kingdom of God, in the Gospel of Luke 4.18: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free..." (Luke 4.18). At times, in order to explain his pedagogy, Freire also makes use of a prophetic language similar to the biblical one:

Problem-posing education is revolutionary futurity. Hence it is prophetic (and, as such, hopeful). Hence, it corresponds to the historical nature of humankind. Hence, it affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead...
(Freire, 2000: 84).

To understand this language, we should look back at the biblical concept of prophetic and the role of the prophet. In the Jewish biblical history, there were two main roles in religious leadership: that of the priest and that of the prophet. The priest had the sacerdotal role of performing the rites and leading the worship life in the temple, and so on. His sacerdotal tasks were very much identified with the official elements of worship, and commonly, the priest was close to the leaders of society, blessing those who were in positions of authority, such as judges and kings. The prophet, on the other hand, was at times excluded from the official religious life of the nation. The prophet was not fixed at the temple, nor did he always have an easy relationship with the leader of the nation. The prophet was the voice of God to the people, denouncing the injustice of society and the oppression of the elites.

It was commonplace for prophets to be persecuted, facing hostility from those who felt threatened by their challenging; and they were often considered to be troublemakers. In the Book of Kings, there is a classic example of this, between King Ahab of Israel and the prophet Elijah: "...and Ahab went to meet Elijah. When he saw Elijah, he said to him, 'Is that you, you troubler of Israel?'" (I Kings 18: 16b-17). Prophets were used to disturbing the order. Another example of a *troubler* prophet was Amos, persecuted both by the priest and the king, because of his sharp words against the dichotomized religion of the nation that worshipped God with offerings and sacrifices at the altar, while at the same time oppressing the poor. Prophet Amos denounced this oppressive situation declaring the message from God to Israel:

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, 'When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?' – skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat. The LORD has sworn by himself, the Pride of Jacob: 'I will never forget anything they have done.' (Amos 8: 4-7).

The prophet would not only evidence the wrongs of the present, but also have a message of hope for the future. Likewise, Freire (2000: 91) brings the theme of hope as a result of a faith that is not naïve, but faith in people for the possibility of the encounter of dialogue, creativity, and life. Dialogue, for Freire, is founded on love, humility and faith. This is also a typical biblical prophetic vocabulary.

The prophetic biblical comparison to Freire, and also to Boff, does not only limit itself to their language and message, but as mentioned before, these two men have chosen to adopt or project the looks of a bearded prophet of old times with long white hair. Though public image and appearance may not be a decisive

element for any kind of argument of judgment of character, it is nonetheless part of the package communicated by the lives and work of Freire and Boff.

Whatever the case, the intention here is not to say that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a book of religious connotations, but rather to exemplify the similarities between its language and the one of the prophets in the Bible. Freire's philosophy on social and education construction is compatible with biblical prophets, when he takes a stand for the poor against social injustice – a struggle and engagement in the libertarian praxis against all kinds of oppressive attempts to kill life, freedom and equality. These similarities only evidence an affinity in the language and message of Freire with the biblical one, and more specifically with the Latin American Liberation Theology. The pedagogy of the oppressed is, as Aronowitz say, “a secular liberation theology” (Aronowitz, 1993: 12).

Another biblical language borrowed by Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is on how emerging leaders can achieve authenticity. He says that “they must ‘die,’ in order to reborn through and with the oppressed” (Freire, 2000: 133). Dying to be reborn is a common phenomenon for many religions, and also familiar in the biblical sense. The notion of dying to be born again as a new creature is found in many parts of the Bible. Compare Freire's words above to what Jesus says in the Gospel of John, “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” (John 12:24) and “Jesus replied: ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again’” (John 3:3).

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, chapter 3, starts with the concept of word as a combination of action and reflection that, as a result, produces praxis of transformation of the world. For Freire, dialogue is the encounter of human beings in equal conditions to “name” the world where they are. The right to the word and the right to express and verbalize one's voice are a fundamental right and vocation of the human being. One becomes human as one speaks. In the same way, one is dehumanized when they are denied the right to name the world around them. As Freire (2000: 88-89) says:

If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity... Because dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation.

(Freire 2000: 88-89).

In the aforementioned, we find a similarity between Freire and the story of creation in the first pages of the Bible:

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

(Genesis 2:19-20).

Moreover, the human capacity to name the world and to create through the word could be another borrowed concept from the biblical idea of the Greek word *logos*, used and translated as 'word' or 'verb' in most biblical translations. Describing the eternal divine nature of Jesus as *logos*, Jesus is presented by John as the 'word' of God, who incarnated and became flesh. It is the word that became praxis, in the revolutionary Freirean language. John writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:1 and 14).

Freire's epistemic system is not a religious one, but although it has a secular approach and argumentation, some biblical color in its construction can be

recognized. My argument here is that the Bible and the historical revolutionary option of Jesus of Nazareth for the liberation of the poor played quite a role in influencing Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This common ground of language and ideas is one of the reasons why the critical pedagogy of Freire can so easily go beyond the educational and adult literacy fields to permeate theological circles.

Freire's influence in Brazilian society went much further than that. It is not the purpose of this research to measure the size and depth of this influence, but it could be argued that the "cultural revolution" (Freire, 2000: 158) of recreating the imaginaries through a critical consciousness that emancipates the oppressed has reached and provoked significant and profound changes in the profile of Christianity in Latin America, also through his influence on libertarian theologians.

4.3.3. Paulo Freire: reading Marx as a comrade of Christ

At this point of this research, it might also be helpful to mention Freire's own description of his faith in Christ in relation to his Marxian revolutionary ideas on the liberation of the oppressed. For Freire, faith in the transcendental cannot be a dichotomized experience disassociated with the realities of life here and now. The worldliness must be together with the transcendental, in order for it to be accepted as faith for Freire. Below is an extract of an account told by Freire in a video:

When I was very young, I went to poor areas of Recife – the streams and mounts of Recife, the rural areas of Pernambuco – to work with the peasants, with people of the slums. I confess that I went there moved by a type of loyalty to Christ... with whom I was a kind of comrade. But

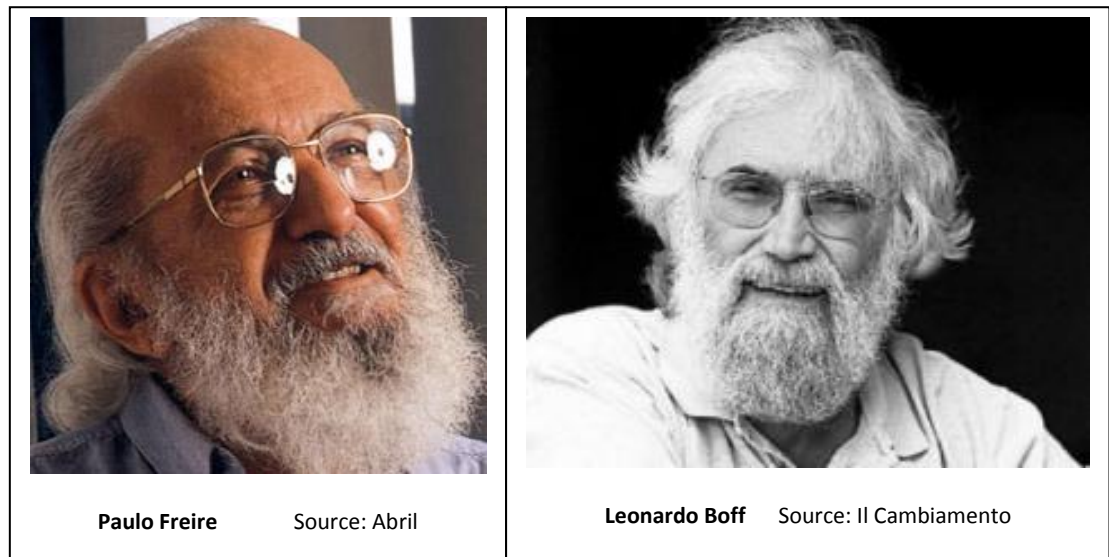
what happened is that when I arrived there, the hard facts of the people of the slums; the hard realities of the peasants; the negation of their being as people; the tendency to that adaptation; the almost inert state in front of the negation of freedom; all that conducted me to Marx... And I went to Marx. And there is where the European journalists in 1970 had not understood my statement: It is that the more I read Marx, the more I found a certain objective basis to continue as Christ's comrade. So, the reading of Marx, of Marx's prolongations, never tried to keep me from finding Christ in the corner of the very slums. I stayed with Marx in the mundane, looking for Christ in the transcendental. (YouTube).

This kind of faith that is found in Freire is not strange to the Latin American context of Christianity. The leftist ideas and language were incorporated in the Christian message for quite many of the Latin American priests.

4.4. Boff and Freire's appearance

Something that draws one's attention is that both Freire and Boff have assumed a style that reminds the public of a prophet of old times or wise man. Surprisingly, this does not seem to be an uncommon practice among leftist intellectuals. Acceptable looks for academics are seen to exist, influencing and affecting their message. As they grew older, both adopted a style which includes a long beard and white hair. An appearance or style might not be of significant importance for the content of their thoughts and their literary/academic contribution or professional production and quality, but in

societies in which the importance of appearance and semiotics is so inflated, Boff and Freire have nonetheless adopted a prophetic-like appearance of men who are identified and driven by their ideologies and purpose, as can be seen in the pictures below.



Now that some of the basic ideas of critical pedagogy, liberation theology, Freire's faith, and Boff's ministry have been shown, we are going to look more closely at the common paths between the theology and the pedagogy of the two books compared in the research.

5. THE COMMON DISCOURSE IN THE BOOKS *PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED* AND *JESUS CHRIST LIBERATOR*

After the general analysis of the different aspects that characterize the context and significance of the discourses of Freire and Boff, in the initial years of the liberation theology and critical pedagogy, now is the time to look more closely at some of the main themes, as well the discourse commonly undertaken by the two.

5.1. Critical awareness of systemic constructions of oppression as an act of love

In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the starting point for the way out of oppression is located in critical awareness of the oppression. This critical awareness does not begin or happen out of an act of vengeance or as a hateful act, but as an act of love. Love for life, love for freedom, love for ourselves as individuals and as a collective, fellow human beings. Freire opens intellectual space for love in his argumentation. His pedagogy is embedded in criticality and a revolutionary element. However, this criticality is neither bitter nor based on hate, but based on love and justice. For Freire (2000: 59-61), education is to happen within the frame of love, and this love is not to be a sadistic love which kills life, creativity and initiative. Neither is this love a fatalistic feeling of docility produced by a distorted view of God and his will. Love must result in a realistic criticality that reasons and acts against unjust systemic constructions. With love, communication and dialogue give everyone the possibility of becoming subjects instead of objects. Everyone gets the right to speak their minds and name the

world around them, giving personal significance to their existence. That is what Freire writes about:

Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible Subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination. Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism in the dominator and masochism in the dominated. Because love is an act of courage, not fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. (Freire, 2000: 89).

Love, for Freire (2000: 176), is the courage and ability to reflect and act – words and action confronting the status quo and taking risks for the liberation of people.

Love is similarly present in Boff's (1978: 67) theology in *Jesus Christ Liberator* – a love in the person of Jesus, as the example of love that is critical towards oppression of laws and systemic prejudice and inequalities. In Boff's argumentation, he finds the love and grace of Jesus surpassing the laws and the rituals and social codes of the sacred books. The love of Jesus, according to Boff, "does not hand people over to libertinism or irresponsibility" (Boff, 1978: 68), but binds all peoples together. In love, people are brought back to the position of subjects, as opposed to objects of norms and conventions. Love is not presented as permission to do whatever people want, in which everything goes, but love is freedom before the law; a freedom, spontaneity and liberty that

positively have to take a stand against all kinds of social prejudices, inequalities, and religious legalism of an oppressive nature. Therefore, the theology of Boff, with its view of the kingdom of God, is a total and global revolution, exemplified in the life of Jesus and in his love. It is a revolution of the order of things, a revolutionary thinking that implies rupture with what is not in accordance with love. This revolution of love is not limited to thinking, but also changes the behavior of the person who experiences “the conversion sought by Jesus and the liberation he won for us, which are related to a love that knows no discrimination” (Boff, 1978: 69). This love knows no limit, but calls for creative imagination.

5.2. Critical consciousness

In pedagogical academic circles, one of the most well known concepts elaborated by Paulo Freire is the one called *critical consciousness*, where the conscious being finds its own voice in dialogue. Freire refers to it as the opposite to the practice of the *banking concept*. In the banking concept, the student is the mere recipient of the knowledge and information transmitted by the teacher. The pedagogic practice that treats the student as an ignorant recipient is oriented by an ideology of oppression that neglects the process of investigation and inquiry. In this practice, the oppressed can be easily dominated, passively accepting the domination prescribed by the dominants.

The pedagogy proposed by Freire aims to reject all practices and assumptions that perceive the students as receptors or passive containers, looking at the students as participants in dialogue and exchange of knowledge. In creativity and the freedom to innovate and create an emancipated existence, this is what Freire calls the *problem-posing concept*, well described in the second chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

When students exercise their critical abilities, they are more likely to be able to confront reality critically, becoming critical thinkers. They participate in dialogue, instead of simply being domesticated and informed according to a certain ideology, or according to myths that surround the construction of the ideology. In the problem-solving education, reflection is stimulated.

Freire describes the human being as the conscious being. When the oppressor denies the oppressed the right to dialogue, a dehumanization of the being occurs, depriving them of possibilities of naming and acting upon their own history. Perhaps what makes the Freirean concepts so relevant is the capacity he has to contextualize and apply his pedagogical theories to the realities of the marginalized third world, where the majority of the “not haves” (Freire, 2000: 58) of the world are concentrated. Freire uses his critical conscious concepts to open up the dialogue on the realities of the Latin-American, as well as other oppressed peoples of the world, conquered and dominated economically and culturally by the oppressive “haves” (Freire, 2000: 58) minorities. Freire refers to the conditions of the deprived poor of Latin America as “living corpses,” “shadows” of human beings, experiencing all kinds of deprivation in life (Freire, 2000: 171).

In *Jesus Christ Liberator*, Leonardo Boff also gives much attention to the importance of critical thinking as he elaborates his theological concepts. His Christology is a critical one: Jesus, as mentioned before, assumed a critical position against the oppressive norms and the oppressive dominant religious and political elites of his time. Thus, followers of Christ should live by the same criterion by which he lived. Liberation Christology critically interprets the realities of the underdevelopment of nations.

This Christology can also be accompanied by an incisive critical exegesis, a reinterpretation of the basic Christological dogmas, and an elaboration of the liberative dimensions to be found in all the joints and sinews of the Christian faith... From this standpoint, one can proceed to criticize the traditional images of Christ that do not foster

liberation; that tend instead to prop up the whole process of colonization and domination. (Boff, 1978: 271).

The criticalness of liberation theology detects and questions mechanisms that generate poverty in the theological social analysis of the realities that must be changed. This critical analysis is an act of an ethical indignation.

5.3. Authoritarianism versus emancipation

Another common tendency in the discourses of Freire and Boff in the books analyzed in this thesis is the affinity they show in the way they elaborate their ideas about authority, the use of power, leadership and dominance of groups by those who hold higher positions in hierarchical structures of any kind.

Freire deals with the theme of authority with much attention throughout the whole of his book. For him, authority can only be well exercised when it is accompanied by freedom and the seeking of the liberation of humankind in dialogue and participation. Otherwise it is abusive. Authority must be exercised with the people, in dialogue, and not by means of manipulation. Discipline, determination and order, necessary for any successful organization, must not turn people into objects to be used. Freire (2000: 178) proposes a leadership that practices dialogic action, instead of “leaders who do not organize the people” but manipulate them, who “do not liberate, nor are they liberated,” but oppress (Freire, 2000: 178).

In different chapters, Freire mentions a number of characteristics and consequences of oppressive abuse of authority. An anti-dialogic authority gets alarmed by suggestions of changes that could liberate and weaken the perpetuation of oppression, trying to maintain the order of things, in order to

keep domination and monologue communication. They manipulate, they objectify people, oppress and perpetuate oppression. They do not trust and do not dialogue. They try to domesticate and undermine possibilities of change, and to keep the oppressed masses in a state of passive docility, in which they can accept their status of alienation. Oppressors kill the life, the initiatives and the emancipation in a “necrophilic behavior” (Freire, 2000: 65) that does not allow creation and transformation, maintaining the state of dependency and submission of the oppressed. In order to do that, oppressors exercise overwhelming control to impose their status as tyrants. One of the strong characteristics of oppressive authority is that it manipulates things in order to alienate the oppressed from the decision-making processes. They impose their truths, views, words and their language, and they set the conditions and rules for events, exercising authoritarian domination instead of libertarian love.

Oppressors justify their privileges by blaming the oppressed for their situation. They try to feel good about themselves by showing “generous gestures” towards the “ungrateful” and “envious,” at times. The oppressed are regarded as potential enemies “who must be watched” (Freire, 2000: 61).

There is a parallel in Boff’s writing, on his critical views about oppressive authority, when he deals with the power of the Christian church and the governments that make use of authoritarian religious power to oppress peoples, more specifically in the context of Latin America. In Boff’s theology, there is awareness about the historical use of power by popes and kings to oppress people. Authoritarianism and manipulation are not spared by Boff’s critical analysis. Theology, Church hierarchy, religious beliefs can be powerful weapons to manipulate, exploit, and oppress people. If nothing else, liberation theology has been a voice from inside Christianity that takes position alongside those in Latin America who have been historically marginalized and exploited by the European colonialist hand.

Boff (1978: 44) draws attention to the European reproduction models forced by Christianity into Latin America, when he says: “The church reproduced models and structures imported from Europe. Very little creativity was allowed the faith.”

(Boff, 1978: 44). According to him, the dogmas of the Greco-Roman understanding of the world were imposed on the South American by the Christian Church – which kept her head, her ways, as well as her dogmas and values as dictated by European heads.

Here, a parenthesis could be opened for a reflection that to this very day, though the vast majority of Christians is in the third world, the headquarters and structural centers of decision-making, as well as the networks of leadership of the great majority of Christian institutions, are in the hands of white Europeans and North Americans. Christianity is still shaped and molded by the Greco-Roman western world civilization, and colonialism was the vessel that made the message get spread to the new world.

Boff proposes a new Christology in his book, one that perceives Christ not as a European image, but one that sees Christ side by side with those struggling in life, those with hope of change in the social oppression of poverty and exploitation. For that reason, Boff (1978: 45) does not put his hopes in institutions. Institutions often stagnate, becoming themselves the reason for their existence, forming mechanisms of self-defense and “dogmatic mentality that fears and represses every kind of criticism that looks to the proper functioning of all institutions” (Boff, 1978: 45). Boff claims that this institutional oppressive self-defense of the Church in South America has killed creativity and life, neglecting liberty outside the Greco-Roman framework of absolutisms, dogmas and conservative hierarchical leadership structures.

In that criticism, Boff’s liberation theology, in affinity with Freire’s pedagogical thinking, is concerned and located in the arena of social structures of power. Boff (1978: 272) calls for ethical indignation and the analysis of structures that generate poverty and dependency. He urges for the “liberative praxis” (Boff, 1978: 272) of transformation, as opposed to small improvements with maintenance of the structures by the dominant classes that make use of science and technology, among others, for perpetuating their oppressive projects of progress – which is in fact a kind of progress defined by the few who

benefit from it, those who keep the wheels running in a way that makes no alternative kind of progress viable.

Criticism is important for Boff, for it “refines and purifies the core of the Christian experience” (Boff, 1978: 45), which for him is the capacity for being reborn into a new life with the Christ who is on the side of the neglected and the oppressed. This is also what Freire means when using a biblical linguistic symbolism: he explains that the oppressor who wants to be liberated and stop oppressing, should be freed by the oppressed, changing their doings, “‘dying’ in order to be reborn through and with the oppressed” (Freire, 2000: 133). In the Bible, this expression is used by Jesus in the gospel of John, chapter 3, when he speaks to Nicodemus about how one can only be reborn by the metaphysic experience of conversion that is the experiencing of a new life. For Freire, it happens when the oppressing leader experiences the “living death” (Freire, 2000: 61) of the oppressed, rejecting oppressive ways and turning to the ways and the side of the oppressed one. This conversion of oppressors is a common discourse for the two writers researched in this thesis.

Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were. Only through comradeship with the oppressed can the converts understand their characteristic ways of living and behaving. (Freire, 2000: 61).

Boff discourses on the same kind of rebirth and conversion, such as ruptures, new ways of acting and thinking towards the praxis that opposes any oppressive behavior (Boff, 1978: 64). Further on, he reemphasizes it:

The preaching of Jesus about the kingdom of God concerns not only persons, demanding conversion of them. It also affects the world of persons in terms of liberation from legalism, from conventions without

foundation, from authoritarianism and the forces and powers that subject people. (Boff, 1978: 72).

So for Boff, the conversion from oppression must be experienced by the oppressor and by the oppressed as well. Boff's Christologic example of perception of authority is the one that sees authority as Christ, who secularized the principle of authority. Established authorities are not entirely the representatives of God: "Give to Ceaser what belongs to Ceaser, and to God what belongs to God" (Matthew 22: 21), but authority is a mere function of service.

You know that among the pagans, rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No, anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave.
(Matthew 20: 25).

5.4. Emancipation as way out of oppressive authoritarianism

Freire argues that, if authoritarianism is the oppression coming from top-down, the end of oppression can only happen when the oppressed ones, in the bottom of the hierarchies in whatever circumstances, find themselves their possibilities to voice and participate in the dialogue and the naming of the world as equals, which is the meaning of human existence. When the oppressed have their critical consciousness exercised, coming out of their apathy, reflecting and acting for democratic participation in the decision making of their lives in

solidarity and community, this is the revolutionary praxis of the freedom of oppression.

Authoritarianism is the violent act of neglecting and denying the right of the oppressed over their possibilities of dialogue, which is the “ontological vocation” (Freire, 2000: 32) of human beings, the subject that are able to transform their world through action. As an opposite alternative for authoritarians, both Freire and Boff discourse on the practice of emancipation. Many other terms also reinforce the ideas of emancipation by them, such as self-affirmation, democracy, participation, practice of freedom and so on – opposing alternatives to the practice of oppressive domination. Emancipation is when the departing point for freedom is the oppressed itself. According to Freire, the dominated must fight for their emancipation. “To that end, it enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism.” (Freire, 2000: 86).

In Christ, Boff (1978: 65-90) finds both the example to break the patterns of oppression and the most perfect model for the praxis of freedom. Jesus is not concerned with laws that harmed and oppressed people. Jesus always acts in a spirit of love and freedom, even when he has to break religious practices, legal prescription, and the traditional status of his time on earth. The gospel in the eyes of Boff’s theology can only be true to Christ’s example when it is not a rigid system of practices that enhances and legitimates social discrimination, but is instead good news and practices that generate freedom and equality, that is to say, all are equally worthy of love:

All are neighbors to each person. All are children of the same Father and because of this all are brothers and sisters. Consequently, the preaching of a universal love represents permanent crisis for all social and ecclesiastical systems. (Boff, 1978: 71).

The critical liberation theology proposed by Boff encourages and proclaims a message of emancipation from oppressive submission. The sermon of the mountain of Jesus in Boff's view is not a group of laws for judgment, but a good news proclamation of love for everyone. Boff (1978: 80) argues that Christ changes the juridical vision of the Mosaic Law, and the harming traditions of religion of his time, exercising good sense, creativity, imagination and originality as a radical and total liberation of the human condition.

The emancipation discoursed by Boff (1978: 67) is intended to happen also as freedom from religious oppression, the kind of oppression that tends to cause guilt and shame, and oppression over consciousness, always falling short in obeying the legal prescriptions of religious absolutisms. The Christology of Boff (1978: 89) also sees in Christ the equality that breaks social taboos concerning the position of women, through the new ways in which Christ related to them as equals to men.

In their critical analysis of how the oppressed are submitted to authoritarianism, with their need of critical consciousness to achieve emancipation, there are some other common themes in their discourse of how the oppressed are submitted to authoritarianism, such as: the culture of silence, obedience, passiveness, and fatalism or docility.

As seen before, Freire (2000: 106) believes that the ability to speak and dialogue is the ontological characteristic of the human being, which the oppressed are nonetheless unable to act on. The oppressed are in a state of silence, unable to express their aspirations. "The theme of silence suggests a structure of mutism in face of the overwhelming force of the limit-situations" (Freire, 2000: 106). There is only an apparent dialogue between the elites and the masses, where the first is the one dictating the communication, which only serves the purposes of the domestication of the oppressed (Freire, 2000: 131). The oppressed accept its status of silent passive obedience. It is important to realize that in this oppressive type of communication, the word *obedience* is very important for the purpose of the oppressor. The oppressed has to be educated to learn how to submit, accept and internalize its inferior, softened,

passive, submissive state of obedience. Obedience and gratitude to the status quo is cultivated in a way by which the oppressed is conformed, “so that the people, in a gesture of gratitude, should accept the worlds of the elites and be conformed to them; the myth that rebellion is a sin against God” (Freire, 2000: 140).

Freire and Boff critically observe how the concept of obedience has been used as a religious element to internalize in the oppressed the need to accept their reality. In order to base the need of a libertarian and emancipated theological new understanding on obedience, one which is freed from the oppressive connotation, Boff argues, from the Christological perspective, on what obedience should mean for a person that can experience the liberation exemplified in the life of Jesus. Boff (1978: 92) makes a revealing and liberating statement: Jesus never used the word *obedience*.

The preaching and demands of Christ do not presuppose an established order. Rather, on the contrary, he frustrates it because of his creative imagination and spontaneity. Insofar as we can judge, the word ‘obedience’ (and its derivatives), while occurring eighty-seven times in the New Testament, was never used by Christ. We do not mean to say by this that Jesus made no harsh demands. Obedience for him is not a question of fulfilling orders, but a firm decision in favor of what God demands within a concrete situation. The will of God is not always manifested in the law. Normally it reveals itself in the concrete situation where conscience is caught unawares by a proposal that demands a response...

Obedience is a question of having our eyes open to the situation; it consists in deciding for and risking ourselves in the adventure of responding to God who speaks here and now. The Sermon on the Mount, which is not a law, is addressed to everyone, inviting us to have extremely clear

consciences and an unlimited capacity for understanding people, sympathizing with them, being tuned into them, and loving them with all their limitations and realizations. (Boff, 1978: 92-93).

The Christian, as a follower of Jesus Christ, ought to be obedient only to those laws and governances that foster “an atmosphere of love and human comprehension” (Boff, 1978: 220) – laws that do not go against the principals of love, faith and hope.

5.5. Fatalism

Fatalism is a common attitude of the oppressed towards their situation. They accept their situation and fate with docility. This fatalism, according to Freire (2000: 62), is created as a magical myth. The oppressed “see their suffering, the fruit of exploitation, as the will of God – as if God were the creator of this ‘organized disorder’”. The oppressed believe in a myth, a “distorted will of God” (Freire, 2000: 62), the destiny or fate, and they accept the oppression as inevitable. Religion has often served the purposes for nourishment of these distorted beliefs in a divine myth of acceptance of oppression as fatalistic.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed is a critical discourse against this fatalism. The problem-posing educational method proposed in the book is an attempt to get away from an education that promotes a perception of naïve and magical acceptance of realities, onto a critical perception of reality by inquiry, which causes resignation and transformation. The revolutionary education that affirms humans as object of their own history to move away from fatalistic immobility is

considered in this sense as “prophetic” by Freire (2000: 84), being able to promote the envisage of a transformed future.

In the same way, Boff's Christology does not encourage a Christian message where the oppressed should have a fatalistic, passive perception of Christ as a Savior. The Savior in the liberation theology of Boff, is also a liberator that came exactly to show the way of discontentment and resignation with injustice. Christ, for Boff, is the greatest example of an uncompromised attitude of inconformity to anything that breaks the sublime commandment of love to all humans. This is another example of the affinity in the discourse of Freire with Boff's theological discourse.

In Boff's theology, the Christian faith does not promote fatalism, but presents Jesus Christ as the liberator of the human condition. The message of the liberator proclaims conversion and rupture, that is, a change in the thinking and acting; revolution and rupture with everything that causes the oppression of human beings. Liberation theology is not an invitation to a fatalistic docility, but a message of liberation where the believer is an active subject. The historical Christ is the new example of a human person that preaches and acts for transformation.

Adherence to Christ is an indispensable condition of participation in the new order to be introduced by God (Luke 12.8-9). In order that such a liberation from sin, from its personal and cosmic consequences, and from all other alienation suffered in creation, be realized Christ makes two fundamental demands: He demands personal conversion and postulates a restructuring of the human world. (Boff, 1978: 64).

Love, in the liberation theological perspective, is not a docile element of acceptance of evil, but “the preaching of a universal love represents permanent crisis for all social and ecclesiastical systems” (Boff, 1978: 71).

This Christology understands Jesus as the divine incarnation in flesh; as the word of God that became the praxis of liberation for humankind, participating in the human condition, using the human language, and giving “our language a new meaning of total liberation and absolute hope” (Boff, 1978: 61), entailing a “specific socio-political commitment to break with the situation of oppression” (Boff, 1978: 264).

5.6. Liberation as a cultural revolution

The common discourse of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Jesus Christ Liberator* is revolutionary in its nature. In fact, the terms revolution and revolutionary come up frequently as Boff and Freire discourse about their critical ideas and methods, and their envisaging towards liberation from oppression.

The table below shows some of the similar characteristics of revolution I have found them to share.

Table 1. *The nature of revolution.*

Table 1 shows similarities between the characteristics of revolution described by Boff and Freire in their books, *Jesus Christ Liberator* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, respectively, (including the pages in which they write about them).

The Nature of Revolution			
According to Freire, revolution:		According to Boff, revolution:	
	Pages		Pages
is for liberation from oppression	172	participates in the global upsurge of liberation	
is one in which the people must be trusted	130	is one of inclusion for everyone	93-95
is not for the people, but with the people	130	takes the side of the oppressed	275
does not fall in the danger of sectarianism	36	believes in the sacrament of brotherhood	218
means liberation from oppression		means liberation from legalism	73
is cultural - a revolution of cultural action and unity	137-179	is the Kingdom of God revolutionizing the world	72
is of true communication and dialogue; in the solidarity, cooperation and fellowship of all human beings - equals who name the world together	77-128	provides a fundamental equality	71
is of freedom and liberation from domination		from the status-quo (first-last, last-first)	74
is of praxis and hope over despair and conformity	91	is for economic, political and social salvation	275
is of collective rejoice	133	is social over personal	46
is of critical consciousness and the awareness of realities of oppression/ the realities experienced by the people in communities	114	opposes any kind of discrimination	96
is one of inquiry and awareness instead of sermonizing and imposing perceptions	119	does not accept or reinforce human alienation	75
has a revolutionary leadership that dialogues and acts with the people - committed to democratic ideal	126-133	is one of inclusion in faith and dialogue	218

5.7. Inclusion in faith

The Christologically-based revolution proposed by the liberation theology of Boff (1978: 218-219) is not framed within the exclusive limits of Christianity. It is a fellowship dialogue with other faiths in the sacrament of brotherhood with all humankind. It is open to justice, goodness, human solidarity and communion, seeking understanding between people to overcome egoism. Here, it is fitting to say that Boff's understanding on the essence of Christianity is very important in order to understand his openness and acceptance of other religions and faiths that do not necessarily have Christ as a Savior, but carry in their core of beliefs the same message of indiscriminating love and justice – the one that Jesus came to proclaim and practice in the first place. There is a strong inclusive notion that is in accordance to what Justin believed: that all who lived according to the logos are Christians, Socrates, Heraclitus... In this view, Boff (1978: 250) believes that all who live out goodness are Christians, and that Christ did not come to found a new religion, but to show how to live in love.

In this revolutionary Christology, Christ is a model of dissenter, reformer, revolutionary and liberator, always in favor of justice and goodness. Boff (1978: 238, 249) argues that Jesus preaches authentic global and structural revolution; liberation from all that alienates.

5.8. A refusal to engage in violent systemic oppressive methods

As a revolutionary discourse, without analysis of the etymological connotations of the term revolution, it is important to note the strong commitment of the literary thoughts of Freire and Boff and their discourse about the use of violence, commonly associated to the idea of revolutionary struggles.

Freire and Boff were both writing in the context of the beginning of the 60s, a time in which revolutionary violent movements were fashionably popping out in the western world. However, that is not the path encouraged by the writers under analysis.

For Freire (2000: 45, 48), dialogue is the meaning for human existence. For him, the use of violence means the continuation of oppressive methods. "Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons" (Freire, 2000: 55). Freire (2000: 48, 62) says that when the oppressed use violence, they become a sub-oppressor, similar to the oppressor. In fact, it is common for the oppressed to be attracted to the oppressor's way of life, using the same methods of violence and exploitation. It is also important to point out that when Freire and Boff discourse on violence, they are meaning a very wide sense of violence that goes way beyond physical violence, into the social sense of the word: violence is *any* act that impedes someone to participate as an equal in the fundamental human right of dialogue, in fellowship with others.

For Boff, liberation from oppression is an act of love. It is *the* Kingdom of God being established. The Christologic foundation for change in society ought to happen when people are no longer friends nor enemies, neighbors nor stranger, but all are brothers and sisters. The attitude and example of Christ break all divisions. As Boff (1978: 76) says, all are seen as equals.

Jesus' stand against vengeance and in favor of pardon and mercy arises from his keen perception of historical reality. There will always be structures based on domination, but that should not dishearten us or lead us to adopt the same approach. Pardon is a necessity. It is the power of love which is capable of living with contradiction and overcoming them from within. (Boff, 1978: 285).

Freedom, just as the Kingdom of God, is not imposed, but offered. The will of God is not to be imposed, but experienced as a liberative task of human beings. That is why Jesus “chose to die rather than to implant the kingdom of God by violence. The latter course would not produce the Kingdom of God but a kingdom grounded on human willfulness, power, domination, and an absence of freedom” (Boff, 1978: 288).

5.9. Libertarian leadership

Different to authoritarianism, libertarian leadership is driven by a strong desire and eagerness to transform the realities of oppression. Freire (2000: 66) mentions the danger of the leader in using oppressive methods. Rather, a libertarian leadership happens when it happens in dialogue. Ideals, ideologies, projects and action should be achieved not by imposition, but from a movement that starts from the will and consciousness of the people. A libertarian leader cannot impose ideas through sold propaganda and manipulation of indoctrination, neither can it oppress with arms of domination (Freire, 2000: 66, 78 and 95), but it has to be committed to liberation (Freire, 2000: 89, 91). A leader that is sensitive to the aspiration of the people (Freire, 2000: 95), a teacher in dialogue, exercising a practice of freedom and not a practice of dominance (Freire, 2000: 80-81). A libertarian leader denounces injustice with prophetic courage (Freire, 2000: 84). A libertarian leader urges for change and transformation (Freire, 2000: 85).

Boff (1978: 264), on the other hand, calls the person of Christ the liberator as the example of a leader that breaks the situation of oppression, with ethical indignation towards poverty, which is a social sin that God does not will. There is an urgent obligation to change things (Boff, 1978: 270).

5.10. Aid and assistance versus social justice; humanism versus humanitarian generosity

The common critical discourse of Freire and Boff looks with hesitation to acts of the humanitarian generosity of oppressors. These acts are contradictory, and serve only for the maintenance of the status quo of dependence and domination. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is not a plea of mercy for the cause of the oppressed, but the “pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation” (Freire, 2000: 53). It is at the same time the oppressed liberating themselves, and liberating the oppressor. Humanitarian generosity objectifies the oppressed, and therefore keeps generating oppression. It is not possible for Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for the oppressor to develop and practice this pedagogy. The oppressor needs to perpetuate the unjust conditions of the oppressed, in order to keep up their “false-generosity,” that is to say, “true generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity” (Freire, 2000: 45).

On the last pages of his book, Boff takes the relationship of the oppressors and the oppressed to the level of the relationships between poor and rich nations. Boff argues that theologians should position themselves as they approach the subject of rich nations as the dominant pole, being “chiefly responsible for the present imbalance and inequity” (Boff, 1978: 294). Boff writes that this position-taking is not an issue of humanitarian aid, but of justice, because the present set of relationships violates the fundamental rights of certain nations, keeping them in an underdeveloped state: “This whole mechanism of injustice is concealed under a cloak of progress and friendly relations” (Boff, 1978: 294). Instead, Boff proposes the prophetic Christological indignation with poverty and its causes not be perceived and practiced as aid and generosity, but as a praxis that is eager for justice and equal relations.

5.11. The banking model, dependence, and Latin America as a recipient of knowledge

As a last topic of this chapter, I want pay attention to the issue of poverty and oppression and the common contextualization of the ideological positioning of Freire and Boff, who have Latin America and Brazil as a historical and geographical context for their critical discourses on oppression.

While Freire gives language to a new discourse for a libertarian education from the perspective of the unprivileged and marginalized, in a very unique way, Boff gives a theological language to a libertarian Christian perspective that can see the message of Christ from the perspective of a poor country; a country marginalized and historically deprived of opportunities of prosperity in equal terms with the colonial powers of the northern Hemisphere.

Boff evokes identification with Christ in the Latin American context. Freire's concept of banking deposit is experienced and proved in the very fact that pedagogy and theology witnessed a breakthrough there. A new South American discourse is born: a discourse that is elaborated in the Brazilian Portuguese language as a response and contribution to the global dialogue that for most of the time is dominated by the North-Atlantic voices. In Boff and Freire, a new kind of intellectual discourse is elaborated, resounding the longings and aspirations of the peoples that have experienced centuries of violent domination and colonialist exploitation, under the mask of global expansion, progress and development.

Boff's liberation theology proposes a new look at the person of Jesus – his face, his attitudes and message, and what is meant by them to Christians and all human beings. Thus, Boff asks, what is the face of this Christ? What is the color of his eyes? What is the political discourse project that this western Christ has served? Who is benefiting from the traditional rigid Christian dogmas and hierarchical structures of the Eurocentric Christianity? Hereby, Boff proposes a new theology – one that listens to the voice of South Americans. Not a deposit-

banking theology, but theology made in the periphery of the world, in the language of the periphery, presenting a savior and liberator to those in the periphery of the world. This new language production breaks the pattern of monologue, giving South Americans the opportunity to enter in dialogue, breaking the pattern of “deposit communiqué” (Freire, 2000: 131). This new theology is committed to changes and liberation of economical, social, political and cultural oppression, as much as it is interested in the soul of the people. It takes a clear social stand in favor of the oppressed. Boff says that this is not a “North Atlantic Christology” (Boff 1978: 267). It is not a colonialist Christology. Nor does it ignore and reinforce oppressive domination of religious, political, economical or cultural hegemonic agendas (Boff, 1978: 267).

Pedagogy of the Oppressed and liberation theology are an important ground for South America to understand its identity in the world context of oppression. Freire adverts against the oppressors’ pattern of blaming the oppressed for its state. It is not difficult to identify the oppressive discourse, which blames South America for the poverty and the cruel conditions of the poor of its continent. The oppressive discourse ignores the centuries of massive violent mass murder, and robbery by the colonial hand of the Christian western civilization of the resources of the Latin peoples. The hegemonic discourse blames and incriminates the South American for their poverty as lazy, corrupted, ignorant, slow, violent and disorganized.

The colonialist Christian European hand used all kinds of violence to silence the cultural and religious voice of the South American continent. Boff reminds us of the dangers of the cultural invasion, giving a wake-up call concerning the endangered good cultural values of the continent:

There are the many good qualities of our people: hospitality, human warmth, a sense of fellowship, an immense yearning for justice and participation, and a taste for fiestas. This cultural ethos is being invaded destructively by the myth of progress in the capitalist mold

and its attendant focus on high consumption by small elites. (Boff, 1978: 269).

Liberation theology is a voice of awareness and sensitivity to the cultural and intellectual invasion of the South American by the hegemonic forces of globalization. Materialism, consumerism and all globalizing projects of development are to be problematized and confronted, in order to find what is dominant project in place, imposed by the privileged elites; a minority which has benefited from this whole machinery of growth and excluding development. This development is of a kind that measures nations in terms of GDP – not by counting the millions excluded from sharing in the cake of prosperity, nor the destruction of life and nature to achieve it. Moreover, there is a pattern dependency and subjugation of some nations in favor of others, with the upper hand on the international dialogue. Boff challenges the capitalism and imperialist extraction of resources and division of labor. Likewise, Freire looks at the international organizations and the one-way flow of knowledge that has been a trend. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a critical naming of these trends and an opportunity for all to find the ground on which they stand: either that of the oppressed or that of the oppressor.

Liberation theology and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* are attempts from the periphery to dialogue with other voices; attempts to have an encounter with voices of the Northern world, so that liberation can happen for all, when dialogue substitutes oppression.

6. CONCLUSION

One of the challenges borne in mind throughout this thesis was finding the relevant common ideas in the discourse analysis of the two different fields of social sciences: the theology and education of the Brazil and the South American continent, and their relation to the global scenario. Though this research was mainly based in two books – Freire's and Boff's – that are nearly half a century old, it is my opinion that they are still very relevant for today's understanding of the realities of the globalized world and for taking into perspective the views of the peripheries of the world as an alternative to the mainstream intellectual production.

Leonardo Boff and Paulo Freire were both brought into perspective. Their discourse was analyzed in order to answer the research questions. I believe that reading Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it becomes easier to understand the *Jesus Christ Liberator* of Leonardo Boff, as well as the significance of liberation theology for the South American continent. Similarly, the pedagogy of Freire gains a new meaning for Christian theological circles, in the struggles of the Christian communities, and in the reflections and praxis of those who are interested in understanding and relating to the Christian world.

Boff and Freire are two icons who have been described and analyzed in the previous chapters. There are many similarities in their discourses. In fact, the vocabulary and criticality of the two were consistently shown to be of great affinity in a number of ways: (1) in the content of their critical ideology; (2) in the revolutionary connotation of the approach of their arguments; and (3) in the common vocabulary and symbolism adopted by them.

Freire, though obviously more secular in his argumentation, builds bridges between the intellectual background and the Christian message and biblical vocabulary, identifying with compassion and love for all humans. Boff, in a deep theological presentation of the meaning of the centrality of the person of Jesus

Christ, tries to contextualize a way and give relevance to the libertarian longings of the Latin American people. Both Freire and Boff possess a prophetic indignation towards the cause of the oppressed. Their criticality resound together, problematizing the capitalist projects of the development of the present world, such as projects that generate underdevelopment and dependence, based on greed, consumerism, materialism and accumulation of resources.

In the future, it is my opinion that much more research could be done, in order to find the historical development of the literary works of Boff and Freire, in the years following their main books researched for this thesis. It could be of great value to have a research to explore the present impact of their ideological legacy in academic circles and international forums, such as the WSF, and so on. The kind of responses they have experienced and the changes and new perspectives the authors have had with the years could be investigated, as well.

At last, it is important to mention the contribution that both Boff and Freire have given to the South American people in their quest for understanding their identity – having in mind the problems, challenges and potential, as well as the frustrations and hopes of a continent marked profoundly by colonialism, slavery, exploitation, poverty, violence and alienation.

Luckily, just as much as the former, Latin America has also been marked by its diversity; its vibrant cultural richness; its festive celebration of life, faith and a deep sense of spirituality; its warmth and eagerness for fellowship and solidarity; its indescribable and abundant nature; the beauty of its languages; with souls filled with hope – who never give up, but keep on dreaming the dream of a better world of equality and democratic participation for everyone.

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